

GAMBLING WITH FATE

By WILLIAM WALLACE COOK

Author of "The Gold Gleaner: A Story of the Granite State," "The Boy's Den," "The Friend of the Enemy," "Rogues of Boston," etc., etc.

(Copyright, 1905, by William Wallace Cook.)

Without a moment's hesitation, Darrel opened the door and stepped within. A tall, thin young man sat at the table, writing.

The clerk was alone, but off to the right was a door, partly ajar, and marked "Private." The scratching of the clerk's pen ceased suddenly when he saw a stranger in the office—a stranger with one hand behind him, under his coat.

"Well?" queried the clerk.

"I have business with Murgatroyd," answered Darrel.

"He's out of town," said the clerk. A shadow of disappointment crossed Darrel's face as the hand was withdrawn from under the coat.

"When will he return?"

"In time for the games at Hawkbill's."

At a few lines for him would he be back?

"Yes, on he would. He always comes to the office after a trip into the hills."

"Where can I write?"

"Step right into his private room. Stranger in camp?"

"Yes."

"Know Murgatroyd?"

"I've known him for a good many years."

Darrel was ushered into the other apartment and the clerk placed papers and envelopes at Darrel's disposal. As he seated himself, Darrel saw a revolver lying on the desk by the inkwell.

The weapon had an ebony stock, arched with a death's head. It was Murgatroyd's, as Darrel well knew, and what chance had its owner gone into the hills without it?

The clerk noticed Darrel's curious glance at the firearm.

"That's the old man's," he vouchsafed; "first time I ever knew him to go way and forget it. Make yourself at home. What name did you say?"

"Nathan."

"All right, Mr. Nathan. Nothing in his layout is too good for the old man's friends. If you don't see what you want, ask for it."

"Much obliged."

The clerk withdrew and resumed his work in the outer office. Picking up the pen, Darrel wrote as follows:

"Mr. Murgatroyd presents his compliments to Mr. Murgatroyd and desires to state that he is now in town awaiting Mr. Murgatroyd's pleasure. Mr. Darrel also wishes it known that he can be found at the evening at Mr. Hawkbill Henderson's. He trusts Mr. Murgatroyd will embrace his opportunity."

Darrel knew his arrival in camp could be noised abroad and reach his enemy's ears. Murgatroyd's absence from Sandy Bar, therefore, made a sudden and unexpected meeting impossible.

Darrel therefore desired the notification to come through himself, in his own way. Having addressed the envelope, he inclosed the folded sheet, and placed the communication on the desk and placed the revolver on it for a paperweight.

Then, lighting a cigar, he leaned back in the chair, wondering why fate couldn't be kind and send Murgatroyd to him as he was then—in his enemy's own room with his enemy's own revolver within easy reach. Presently the artfulness of Murgatroyd's character suggested something and the revolver suggested something else.

Picking up the weapon, Darrel resealed a spring and turned the barrel down, revealing the cylinder. Six cartridges nestled murderously under its eyes.

He listened intently. The scratch, scratch of the clerk's pen came to him monotonously.

One by one he extracted the cartridges and then, by means of a sharp pointed steel letter opener he embedded deeply in each leaden slug the initial "M." To replace the cartridges and return the revolver to its original place by the inkwell took but a moment.

Next, Darrel recovered the pen and continued his writing.

"In the event that Mr. Nathan Darrel, in whose pocketbook this message placed, should be made a victim of any play, he respectfully suggests the following for the coroner's consideration:

First—The fact that Lester Murgatroyd has sworn to shoot Nathan Darrel on sight.

Second—The fact that a covert attack has ever been preferred by Lester Murgatroyd to a meeting in the open.

Third—The fact that the bullets in Lester Murgatroyd's revolver have been marked with the letter "M."—Note: the letter "M" might be mistaken for "W" and technicalities have more than once saved Murgatroyd.

A word to the wise, etc."

Folding the sheet Darrel placed it in a red Morocco purse taken from his coat pocket. Immediately afterwards he got up and passed into the other room.

"Get through?" asked the tall, thin young man.

"Yes," said Darrel. With a pleasant "good afternoon" he left the office and turned his steps in the direction of one of the two hotels which the town boasted.

CHAPTER III.

DARREL'S GAME AT HAWKBILL'S.

Properly equipped with a stony disregard for human greed and frailty, any observer could have loitered in Hawkbill's on and after ten p. m. and been certain of exciting entertainment. A philosopher of another school might have seen more than enough to point a moral and adorn a tale and perhaps have retreated with a discouraged sense of man's inhumanity to man.

Darrel could be indifferent and hard, or sympathetic and yielding. Deep in his heart was ever a feeling that stirred at another's misfortune and his moods varied with the characters of the players as well as with the play.

He stood close to a table, facing the door and dividing his attention between the fall of the cards and the men who entered. An old, old game familiarly known as "two pluck ones" was in progress, wherein a pair of merciless campaigners were taking money from a beardless and rash youth who sat between them.

Cheating, on the part of the gamblers, was constant and flagrant. But the boy had eyes for only his own cards and was playing with absorbed and tremulous intensity.

"They'll have headlines on me in the eastern papers," he recklessly averred, "unless I make a big winning to-night."

"There's no telling when the luck'll turn," answered one of the gamblers insinuatingly. "Shifting a cut" with lightning quickness. "It's all chance, you know. Up to now I've won, but from this out it may be your turn."

The youth clenched his teeth and whitened, for he had a loser's grudge against a winner's assumed superiority. He wagered the last of his money—a dozen crisp bills marked with a "C" in one corner.

He lost. Rising from the table with the quiet remark, "I'm done, gentlemen," he walked steadily out into the darkness, far beyond the glare of the red lamps.

It was the old story of the moth and the flame. Darrel knew it well, but not so well that familiarity bred anything but deeper and more consuming pity.

He was at the youth's back in time to snatch a six-shooter from his convulsive hand.

"Come, come," he said, as the boy gave a startled cry and turned on him. "Where is your manhood, young fellow?"

"Manhood!" was the bitter response, "ask the red, white and blue chips at Hawkbill's. Give me that, or by—"

With a plunge he sought to catch the weapon and tear it from Darrel's grasp. "Softly!" warned the other, clutching his hand. "If I get your money back for you will you promise never to touch another card so long as you live?"

"Who are you?" gasped the youth. "My money is gone and I am ruined. How can you get it back for me?"

"Follow me and you will find out. As to who I am, that is beside the question. Have I your promise?"

"Yes; but I should like—"

"Here's your revolver. I'd throw it away, if I were you."

Darrel pushed the weapon into the young man's hand, turned sharply and retraced his steps to Hawkbill's. The two gamblers were still at table.

What Darrel purposed doing called for skill and courage. Both qualities were his and he sought the issue with that airy confidence to which others had often attributed his success.

It was by meddling in a somewhat similar way that he had earned the



"NOW THEN, MY BUCK," CRIED A VOICE WITH PASSION. "WE'LL SETTLE OUR DIFFERENCES MAN TO MAN."

hatred of Murgatroyd. Yet that had not cured him of the dangerous habit. He had observed the gamblers carefully. One was past middle age and had iron gray hair and beard; the other was but little older than the man they had victimized.

"Well, Sturgis," the younger man was saying as Darrel came up. "If we

could find some one else with a roll this night's work would break the record."

"You're never satisfied, Cliff," returned Sturgis, tossing off the contents of a glass just brought by a waiter.

"May I sit in with you, gentlemen?" inquired Darrel, pleasantly.

At that moment he looked the unsophisticated and ingenious eastern gentleman, caring nothing for a little money and desirous only of whiling away the time. As he spoke, he displayed a large roll of bills.

"I had thought of quitting," said Sturgis, shooting a glance at his confederate, "but still, if you want a round, I guess I could accommodate you. Do you want to take a hand?" he added, carelessly, to the other gambler.

"I might," returned Cliff, with apparent reluctance. "I'm not having much luck to-night, though."

"Three will make it more interesting," observed Darrel, dropping into a chair that placed him so he could still watch the entrance.

Thereupon the playing began, the youth whose battle Darrel was fighting, approaching the table and watching eagerly. Darrel allowed the two harpies to win enough of his money, to give them confidence, then carelessly proposed that they play for a stake consisting of all the money they had about them.

Certain of winning, the other two agreed, and from that moment to the end of the game Darrel showed himself the veteran player he was. Sturgis purposely dealt him three aces and himself four queens, the younger man dropped out in feigned despair and Darrel plucked a diamond stud from his shirt and laid it on the heap of gold and silver.

From various parts of the room a general movement of the idly curious had set in towards that particular table, which made it necessary for Darrel to request, in his politest tones, that those between the table and the door should draw aside in order that he might watch for the entrance of "a man he was waiting for."

The request was complied with. Behind his chair Darrel could hear the sharp, tense breathing of the boy.

Sturgis asked how much the diamond stud was worth and, when informed borrowed \$500 from Hawkbill Henderson, \$200 to meet Darrel's bet and \$300 to "raise" him. Darrel took a magnificent watch from his vest pocket, the gold case studded with gems.

"I am a stranger here," said he, quietly, "and this is as far as I can go. What have you?"

Sturgis exultantly spread out his four queens. Darrel laid down four kings and an ace.

"Take your money," said he, turning to the boy.

A growl of rage came from Sturgis. Catching up his opponent's discard he turned the pasteboards over.

"Tricked!" he shouted, springing erect. "He had three aces and discarded two! Hawkbill, I demand the stakes."

Henderson, red-faced, bull-necked and corpulent, swaggered closer.

"This place is on the square," he said wheezingly to Darrel, "and if you've juggled the cards the stakes go to Sturgis."

Leaning forward with a quick movement, Darrel swept his hand under the edge of the table in front of Sturgis. Sturgis tried to stop the hand, but was not quick enough.

The hand reappeared with a small, nickel-plated contrivance known as a table "hold out." A murmur passed through the crowd.

"Sturgis has been using that all evening," remarked Darrel, coolly. "He cheated that boy out of his money and—"

With an imprecation, Sturgis hurled himself towards Darrel, a gleaming object in his mind. Hawkbill threw himself in the way and ordered Sturgis to keep back.

It was evident that the baffled gambler had friends who would rally to his side and Darrel swept the stakes into his hat, clapped the hat on his head and caught the boy by the arm and hurried him out.

At the hotel the young man's money was returned to him. Tears stood in his eyes as he thanked Darrel and the latter, gruffly bidding him remember his promise, went out into the dark street intent on returning to Hawkbill's and waiting for Murgatroyd.

To be continued.

A Daily Thought.

"Aim for success. Do not select a calling that is beyond you. It is better to be a good housekeeper than a poor teacher; an expert stenographer than an inferior lawyer; an efficient nurse than an inefficient doctor. The more ambitious calling may bring much notoriety in the beginning, but failure is a word that carries with it a noxiousness that is nerve destroying, and strength of purpose and stick-to-itiveness should be well determined before one sets out upon a career."

York Mail and Express.
The heads of the office holders—New York City.
It is the reformers that are out at it in this country. In this country they are in that country they are out at it. Everything is the other way around.
Round, round.

ON A WAR FOOTING.

President Roosevelt's Strenuous Peace Policy Suspicious.

The question: Is the United States being prepared for war? may well be asked. Joseph Pulitzer in his open letter to President Roosevelt, says:

"We are spending more money now on our navy than any other country in the world, except England; a third more on our army than Austria-Hungary, with nearly 400,000 men under arms, and twice as much as Japan in time of peace, and more on army, navy and pensions than is spent for the same purposes by any of the over-loaded military powers of continental Europe without exception. Our navy is costing us \$98,000,000 this year. France, hitherto the second naval power in the world, is spending \$61,000,000 on hers, and Germany, under your illustrious counterpart, the Emperor, \$50,000,000. On its face, our activity looks as if we were preparing for certain war."

"We are building thirteen battleships to England's ten, Germany's seven and France's six, and thirteen great armored cruisers, practically battleships, to England's sixteen, France's six and Germany's two. We are just finishing half a dozen smaller cruisers. We have more first-class battleships already built than any other country in the world except England, and the English editor of Brassey's Naval Annual says that in ten years at the present rate we shall displace Great Britain as the first naval power of the globe. Yet you keep prodding us on. How much do you want? Fifty years ago our navy consisted of a few wooden frigates, and our peaceful merchant fleets covered the seas. To-day we have over 600,000 tons of steel battleships and cruisers, and our merchant marine in the foreign trade has shrunk until it is hardly larger than the navy that is supposed to protect it."

"I am not speaking to Democrats—this is not a party matter. Your schemes are personal, not partisan. Your boasted Americanism is really Europeanism. It is the very antithesis of the true American spirit. You are proposing to Europeanize our institutions. Not content with the extraordinary increase in the powers and patronage of the President of the United States, you propose to become practically the President of the whole Western Hemisphere. The accidental head of one republic, you would make yourself the head of twenty-one. In the name of James Monroe, the strict constructionist of the Constitution, and under a hypocritical pretense of duty, you assume prerogatives that would turn Hamilton pale and that would make Monroe rise in his grave. I defy any of your eulogists, from the brilliant and distinguished Whitelaw Reid downward, to show one line in the writings of any previous President of any party justifying your proposed suzerainty over the Western Hemisphere. But if you fail to find any warrant for your policy in the Constitution of the United States or the practice of your predecessors, you may find it abundantly in the quarter from which you borrowed the policy itself—in Europe." [Jos. Pulitzer in New York World.]

OF A MILITARY PEOPLE.

"We are not a military people, bent on conquest, or engaged in extending our domains in foreign lands, or desirous of securing natural advantages, however great, by force; but a people loving peace, not only for ourselves, but for all the nations of the earth."

"The display of great military armaments may please the eye and, for the moment, excite the pride of the citizen, but it cannot bring the country the brains, brawn and muscle of a single immigrant, nor induce the investment here of a dollar of capital. Of course, such armament as may be necessary for the security of the country and the protection of the rights of its citizens, at home or abroad, must be maintained. Any other course would be not only false economy, but pusillanimous. I protest, however, against the feeling, now far too prevalent, that by reason of the commanding position we have assumed in the world, we must take part in the disputes and broils of foreign countries; and that because we have grown great we should intervene in any important question that arises in other parts of the world. I also protest against the erection of any such military establishment as would be required to maintain the country in that attitude. We should confine our international activities solely to matters in which the rights of the country or of our citizens are directly involved. That is not a situation of isolation, but of independence." [From Judge Parker's speech of acceptance.]

THE BURLINGTON'S ATTRACTIVE SUMMER TOURS.

To Colorado, Utah and the Black Hills.

Only one fare plus 50 cents round trip to Denver, Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Salt Lake City and the Black Hills. Daily from June 1; all summer limits.

To California.

From August 15 to September the round trip for \$47.50 from St. Louis; \$45 from the Missouri River; from other points proportionately. Only \$11 more returning via Puget Sound.

The World's Fair.

The most magnificent creation by the hand of man. Greatly reduced excursion rates daily throughout the Exposition period. Consult nearest ticket agent for exact rates, also for information relative to hotels and stopping places.

To Minnesota, Yellowstone Park, etc.

Greatly reduced rates to these attractive summer regions.

Stop-Overs in St. Louis.

Stop-overs for the Exposition allowed on through tickets. Buy through over the Burlington. Consult initial agent or write the undersigned for rates, routes, berths, specific information and publications.

Wm Fitzgerald, & A. L. W. Wakely, G. P. A.

Hannibal, Mo. St. Louis, Mo.

J. L. LYON, Agent

A St. Louis World's Fair

Free Information Bureau

has been established

at Union Station, Moberly, Mo.,

in charge of Mr. H. E. Watts,

where information will be cheerfully furnished.

All letters of inquiry will be given prompt attention.

TRAVELERS RAILWAY GUIDE

25 CENTS

158 ADAMS ST. CHICAGO.

I. L. OWEN, Jr.

Breeder and Shipper of

REGISTERED POLAND.

CHINA HOGS.

For Sale—A few choice spring

pigs, either sex.

R. F. D. No. 5, Monroe City Mo.

J. T. Sandifer,

Licensed

Auctioneer,

Monroe City, Mo.

Everybody knows Jim

and where to find him.

SATISFACTION

GUARANTEED.

Coach Excursion

Rates

TO THE

World's Fair,

ST. LOUIS, MO.

VIA WABASH.

From all Stations on Each Tuesday and Thursday during

months August and

September.

Exceedingly Low Rates on

Dates Mentioned Above.

Tickets good returning

for 7 days from date

of sale.

The WABASH is the only line that

sends you direct at World's Fair Grounds on their own rails.

H. E. WATTS, P. & T. A.

Moberly, Mo.

Dr. Hornback, Oculist and

Aurist, Hannibal, Mo.